(a) whether there is any plan to increase the flights of Indian Airlines to other countries including the gulf countries;

(b) if so, the names of countries for which new flights are likely to be commenced and by when and the other details in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons for not increasing the flights inspite of the increasing demand?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Indian Airlines has recently introduced thrice weekly services to Dubai from Hyderabad.

More services by Sri Lanka Airlines

3056. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sri Lanka Airlines would operate more services in India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the strategy of the Air India to face the challenge?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) to (c) During last round of air services consultation between India and Sri Lanka held in New Delhi on 17-18th February, 2000, the designated airline of Sri Lanka has been allowed to utilize additional 745 seats per week out of the unused entitlement of the Indian side subject to a Code Share/Block Space arrangement with the designated Indian Carrier. The designated airline of Sri Lanka has also been granted access to Kolkata and Varanasi. Actual operations are however left to their commercial judgement.

Subsidy to Haj Pilgrims

3057. SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the nature of subsidy given to pilgrims going for Haj each year;

(b) when it was commenced for the first time;

(c) what was the cost per head;

(d) the number of persons who have been subsidised each year respectively, till date;

(e) the number of Indian Airlines planes which were earmarked for onward and return journeys for such pilgrims; and

(f) the number of outside planes hired each year respectively?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAD YADAV): (a) The difference between the cost of operation and the amount charged from each Haj Pilgrim (which has been Rs. 12,000^ since 1994) is the subsidy paid by the Government per head.

(b) to (d) The transportation of Haj pilgrims to Jeddah by air alone was started since 1995. Prior to 1995, the transportation of Haj pilgrims was undertaken by both air and sea. The details of cost per Haj pilgrims and the number of pilgrims who availed of the benefit from 1995 onwards are given below:—

Year	Cost per Haj Pilgrims (Rs.)	No. of pilgrims subsidized
1995	17500	30503
1996	19403	50347
1997	26600	53766
1998	29518	63648
1999	28108*	62103
2000	28666*	71214
2001	32606	70913

*Provisional

(e) The Haj operations are undertaken by the aircraft chartered from private operators. The aircraft of Indian Airlines are used only for hub and spoke flights from Jammu & Srinagar to Delhi.

(f) On an average, six aircrafts are hired every year for undertaking haj charter operations.